

1. A method for controlling a user station configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

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automatically transporting desired data determined to be available from each of the selected data object sources to the user station.

2. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling operation is performed in accordance with a user-modifiable schedule.

3. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling operation is performed in accordance with a separate, user-modifiable schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

4. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

5. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises news updates.

6. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates to respective ones of multiple publications.

7. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises software updates to respective ones of multiple software

8. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates for respective ones of multiple software products installed on the user station.

10. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the user interface presents the user with a list of available data object sources to choose from.

12. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling operation is performed by automatically effectuating a separate communication session with each of the selected data object sources.

13. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling and transporting operations are performed in accordance with an object manifest that includes at least an address of each of the selected data object sources and an identification of the desired data at each of the selected data object sources.

14. The method as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the object manifest is generated through an application programming interface based upon input of the user via the user interface.

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16. The method as set forth in Claim 15, wherein the user interface is provided by the transporter software.

18. The method as set forth in Claim 17, wherein the higher-level software entity includes an HTML-capable viewer.

20. The method as set forth in Claim 15, wherein the transporter software is embedded in a higher-level software entity.

22. The method as set forth in Claim 21, wherein the higher-level software entity includes an HTML-capable viewer.

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24. The method as set forth in Claim 23, wherein each of the separate polling schedules is user-modifiable.

25. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling and transporting operations are performed in accordance with an object manifest that includes at least an address of each of the selected data object sources, an identification of the desired data at each of the selected data object sources, and a respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

26. The method as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the object manifest is user-modifiable through an application programming interface based upon input of the user via the user interface.

27. The method as set forth in Claim 25, wherein the respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources can be different.

28. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling operation is performed by automatically effectuating a separate communication session with each of the selected data object sources in accordance with a separate respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

29. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling operation is performed by automatically effectuating a separate communication session with each data object source in accordance with a user-modifiable polling schedule for that data object source.

30. The method as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the automatically polling operation is performed by automatically effectuating a separate communication session with each data object source in accordance with a polling schedule for that data object source that is specified by that data object source.

32. The method as set forth in Claim 25, wherein the respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources is user-modifiable.

34. The method as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising automatically storing the transported desired data on a persistent storage medium at the user station.

36. The method as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising automatically storing the transported desired data on a storage medium at the user station.

38. The method as set forth in Claim 37, wherein the at least one existing product includes a database product.

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40. The method as set forth in Claim 37, wherein the at least one existing product includes an information and/or software product.

41. A method for controlling a user station configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

providing a user interface to enable a user at the user station to select multiple ones of the multiplicity of independently-operated data object sources;

automatically effecting respective communication sessions with each of the selected data object sources; and

automatically fetching desired data from each of the selected data object sources during each of the respective communication sessions.

42. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the respective communication sessions are effected in accordance with a separate schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

43. The method as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the separate schedule for each of the selected data object sources is user-modifiable.

44. The method as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the separate schedule for each of the selected data object sources is specified by the respective data object source.

45. The method as set forth in Claim 42, wherein the separate schedule for each of the selected data object sources can be different.

46. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

47. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises news updates.

49. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises software updates to respective ones of multiple software products.

51. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises updates for a single product installed on the user station.

53. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the user interface presents the user with a menu of available data object sources to choose from.

54. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the automatically effecting respective communication sessions and fetching operations are performed in accordance with an object manifest that includes at least an address of each of the selected data object sources and an identification of the desired data at each of the selected data object sources.

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57. The method as set forth in Claim 56, wherein the user interface is provided by the transporter software.

58. The method as set forth in Claim 56, wherein the user interface is provided by a higher-level software entity.

59. The method as set forth in Claim 58, wherein the higher-level software entity includes an HTML-capable viewer.

60. The method as set forth in Claim 54, wherein the transporter software includes an HTML-capable viewer.

61. The method as set forth in Claim 56, wherein the transporter software is embedded in a higher-level software entity.

62. The method as set forth in Claim 61, wherein the higher-level software entity provides the user interface.

63. The method as set forth in Claim 62, wherein the higher-level software entity includes an HTML-capable viewer.

64. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the automatically effecting respective communication sessions and fetching operations are performed in accordance with an object manifest that includes at least an address of each of the selected data object sources, an identification

of the desired data at each of the selected data object sources, and a respective fetching schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

65. The method as set forth in Claim 64, wherein the respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources can be different.

66. The method as set forth in Claim 64, wherein the respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources is specified by the respective data object source.

67. The method as set forth in Claim 64, wherein the respective polling schedule for each of the selected data object sources is user-modifiable.

68. The method as set forth in Claim 41, wherein the automatically effecting respective communication sessions and fetching operations are performed without any user action or intervention.

69. The method as set forth in Claim 41, further comprising automatically storing the fetched data on a persistent storage medium at the user station.

70. The method as set forth in Claim 41, further comprising automatically storing the fetched data in a designated storage location on a storage medium at the user station.

71. The method as set forth in Claim 41, further comprising automatically storing the fetched data on a storage medium at the user station.

72. The method as set forth in Claim 71, further comprising automatically integrating the fetched data stored on the storage medium into at least one existing product installed on the user station.

73. The method as set forth in Claim 72, wherein the at least one existing product includes a database product.

74. The method as set forth in Claim 72, wherein the at least one existing product includes a software product.

75. The method as set forth in Claim 72, wherein the at least one existing product includes an information and/or software product.

76. Software stored on a computer-readable storage medium at a user station configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

an interface function that provides a user interface to enable a user at the user station to select multiple ones of the multiplicity of independently-operated data object sources to be polled;

a polling function that automatically polls each of the selected data object sources in order to determine availability of desired data at each of the selected data object sources; and

a transport function that automatically transports desired data determined to be available from each of the selected data object sources to the user station.

77. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the polling function automatically polls in accordance with a user-modifiable schedule.

78. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the polling function automatically polls in accordance with a separate, user-modifiable schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

79. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

80. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises news updates.

81. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates to respective ones of multiple publications.

82. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises software updates to respective ones of multiple software products.

83. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates for respective ones of multiple software products installed on the user station.

84. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises updates for a single product installed on the user station.

85. The software as set forth in Claim 76, wherein the user interface presents the user with a list of available data object sources to choose from.

86. Software stored on a computer-readable storage medium at a user station configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

an interface function that provides a user interface to enable a user at the user station to select multiple ones of the multiplicity of independently-operated data object sources;

a communication function that automatically effects respective communication sessions with each of the selected data object sources; and

a fetch function that automatically fetches desired data from each of the selected data object

sources during each of the respective communication sessions.

87. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the communication function automatically effects the respective communication sessions in accordance with a user-modifiable schedule.

88. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein communication function automatically effects the respective communication sessions in accordance with a separate, user-modifiable schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

89. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

90. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises news updates.

91. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates to respective ones of multiple publications.

92. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises software updates to respective ones of multiple software products.

93. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates for respective ones of multiple software products installed on the user station.

94. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises updates for a single product installed on the user station.

95. The software as set forth in Claim 86, wherein the user interface presents the user with a list of available data object sources to choose from.

96. A user station configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

means for providing a user interface to enable a user at the user station to select multiple ones of the multiplicity of independently-operated data object sources to be polled;

means for automatically polling each of the selected data object sources in order to determine availability of desired data at each of the selected data object sources; and

means for automatically transporting desired data determined to be available from each of the selected data object sources to the user station.

97. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein means for automatically polling automatically polls in accordance with a user-modifiable schedule.

98. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein means for automatically polling automatically polls in accordance with a separate, user-modifiable schedule for each of the selected data object sources.

99. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the non-proprietary network is the Internet.

100. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises news updates.

101. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates to respective ones of multiple publications.

102. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises software updates to respective ones of multiple software products.

103. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the desired data at respective ones of the selected data object sources comprises updates for respective ones of multiple software products installed on the user station.

104. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the desired data at each of the selected data object sources comprises updates for a single product installed on the user station.

105. The user station as set forth in Claim 96, wherein the user interface presents the user with a list of available data object sources to choose from.

106. A user station configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

means for providing a user interface to enable a user at the user station to select multiple ones of the multiplicity of independently-operated data object sources;

means for automatically effecting respective communication sessions with each of the selected data object sources; and

means for automatically fetching desired data from each of the selected data object sources during each of the respective communication sessions.

107. The user station as set forth in Claim 106, wherein the respective communication sessions are automatically effected in accordance with a user-modifiable schedule.

108. The user station as set forth in Claim 106, wherein the respective communication sessions are automatically effected in accordance with a separate, user-modifiable schedule for each

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